



## Access Board News: Boy Scouts Improve Accessibility at National River Area August 20, 2013

This year's National Boy Scout Jamboree at Bechtel Summit in West Virginia featured a day of service project to improve accessibility at the nearby New River Gorge National River. Boy scouts teamed up with National Park Service personnel to make a trail, picnic and camping areas, parking, and a fishing bridge accessible for people with disabilities. The project, which took place July 19, taught scouts how to achieve access to the great outdoors and enabled them to earn a Messengers of Peace patch. Over 300 scouts participated in the event, which involved 8 troops from different parts of the country.



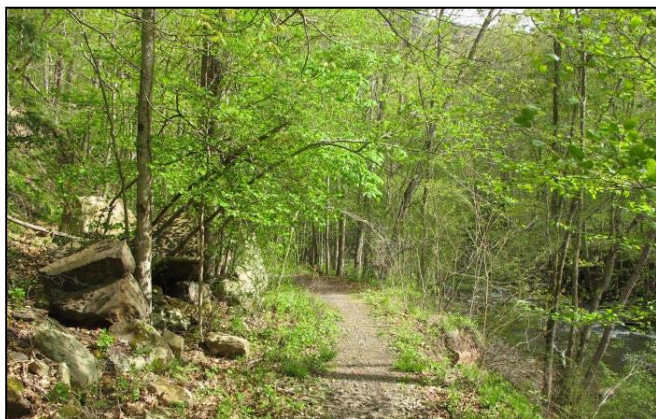
"This was an amazing opportunity to raise awareness of accessibility while at the same time serving the community and improving access to a National Park site," states Bill Botten, an Access Board accessibility specialist who participated in the event. Botten has been involved in the Board's development of new accessibility guidelines for outdoor environments.

Botten was joined by J.R. Harding, Ed.D. of the Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities who previously served as a member and Vice Chair of the Access Board. Harding and Botten assisted the National Park Service (NPS) and the Boy Scouts in planning and conducting the event. They also helped kick off the event with a brief address to the scouts. In their remarks, they noted the importance of accessibility to all types of buildings and sites, including outdoors spaces, and how it can be accomplished through careful planning and teamwork.



Bill Botten (l), J.R. Harding (c), and NPS Superintendent Trish Kicklighter (r) kick-off the event with an address to the scouts.

"The National Park Service and the Boy Scouts did a tremendous job making this happen," said Harding, an Eagle Scout himself. "A project like this is a magnificent teaching tool, and the scouts can take what they've learned back to their communities and help inspire access improvements in other locations across the nation."



Existing trails had limited surface preparation and were overgrown, which impacted accessibility.

The project encompassed two trail heads, a 300-foot section of trail, an accessible fishing bridge, campsites, picnic areas, parking areas, and routes to a comfort station located in Glade Creek. The work focused on creating or refurbishing trails and surfaces at parking and picnic and camping areas. Accessible permeable surfaces were achieved using firmly compacted gravel held in place by paving grids.



## Trail Section

To resurface trails, paving grids with an integral filter fabric were staked in place. The fabric backing inhibits plant growth but allows drainage.



Once the paving grids were in place, the scouts formed bucket brigades to move gravel to the grid where it was firmly compacted. Excess gravel was swept or raked off. The forms keep the gravel in place to create a firm and stable surface and minimize maintenance and erosion.







The resulting surface is firm and stable to support wheeled mobility devices. Over 300 feet of trail were resurfaced in this manner.

### Campsite and Picnic Areas

Like trails, campsites and picnic areas also were overgrown with gravel surfacing that was difficult to traverse using mobility devices (left). Existing picnic tables that were not wheelchair accessible (right) were replaced by new ones assembled on site. A campsite and picnic areas were resurfaced for improved accessibility.





At these locations, a similar surfacing technique was used but with a different type of paving grid. This one featured 4' by 4' grids that snap together. Gravel was then poured over the grid and compacted. The new surface treatment did not extend to tent pad areas so that the ground there would remain suitable for staking tent pegs.



The difference is noticeable in paths as they existed (left) and after they were resurfaced (right).



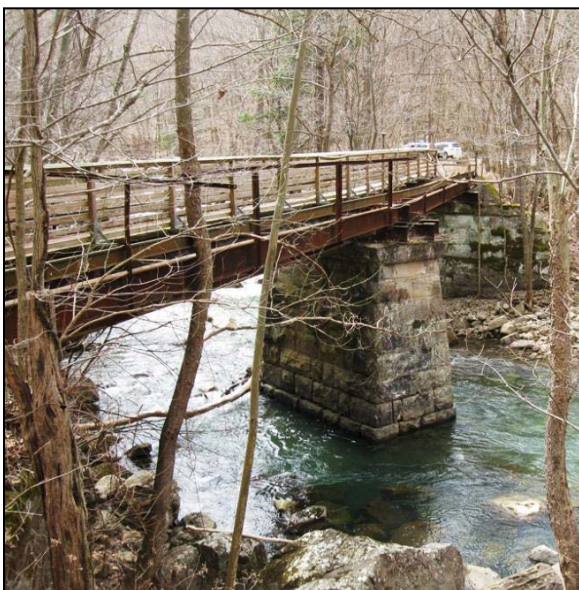




Bill Botten tries out a resurfaced route that connects an accessible comfort station to the camping area.

### Fishing Bridge

A former railroad bridge now serves hikers and fishers alike. It was widened and refurbished as part of the project. New railings were built with lowered portions to create accessible fishing and viewing locations.



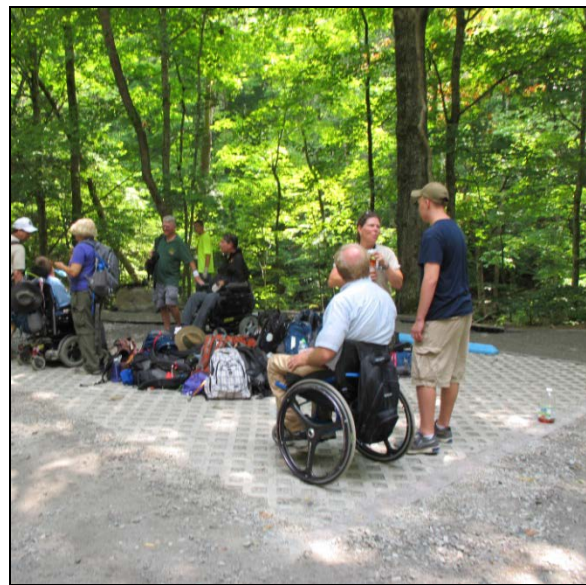


## Parking

The project also included van accessible parking spaces in parking areas at trailheads and picnic and camping areas. The scouts created the accessible spaces by clearing and compacting the ground and installing concrete turf blocks that can withstand the weight of vehicles.



Gravel was installed and brushed in and compacted to form an accessible surface suitable for vehicle traffic.





## The Results

Scouts were able to try out the finished product for themselves.



J.R. Harding, an Eagle Scout and former member of the Access Board, made the rounds to each project site to check out the work and to speak with the scouts.

"The opportunity to engage the scouts on accessibility and outdoor recreation was a true highlight for me," noted Harding. "I really enjoyed sharing stories, hearing their take on the project, and learning about the experiences scouts, including those with disabilities, have had."



Over 300 scouts participated in the project



Bill Botten (l) and J.R. Harding, Ed.D. (r) with  
Trish Kicklighter, NPS Superintendent of the  
New River Gorge National River (c).



For further information on accessible outdoor environments or Boy Scout programs, contact:



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